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Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

21st plenary meeting
Friday, 23 September 2011, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Allam-mi (Chad), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 7.05 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces.

Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Bainimarama (Fiji): I bring warm greetings to all from the Government and people of Fiji. May I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Al-Nasser on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session and pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss.

This year, it was my honour to open new missions in Indonesia and South Africa. The Fiji High Commission in Pretoria is our first diplomatic mission on the continent of Africa, and we see it as a gateway to that great continent. Our new embassy in Jakarta is intended to strengthen our warm, fraternal relations with Indonesia. In the same spirit, I journey next week to Brazil to open Fiji's first embassy on the South American continent.

In May this year Fiji had the privilege of being admitted to membership of the Non-Aligned Movement. We have pledged to play our full part in the Movement's activities, particularly in the area of South-South cooperation and sustainable development. These positive developments complement the Fijian Government's Look North Policy and our intention to expand relations with non-traditional partners. We believe that such an expansion of outlook is essential to our national development and our full exercise of Fiji's global rights and responsibilities. Here at the United Nations, we are active members of the Asia-Pacific Group and, along with our fellow Pacific small island developing States, we greatly appreciate the support given to us by members of that regional group.

Fiji's guiding document, the People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress, has given our nation the task of enhancing Fiji's international relations, both bilaterally and multilaterally. In pursuit of this task, since the beginning of last year Fiji has formalized diplomatic relations with 37 countries, bringing to a total of 114 the number of countries with which Fiji has formal diplomatic relations. Fiji is firmly on the

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path of formalizing our diplomatic relations with all States Members of the United Nations.

Fiji remains steadfastly committed to the work of the United Nations in safeguarding world peace, including all international counter-terrorism efforts. In 2006, Fiji voted in favour of the preparation of a robust arms trade treaty (resolution 61/89), and we commend all those who have shown commitment to preparing that treaty for signature in 2012.

Fiji's commitment to the Charter of the United Nations remains steadfast. Our tradition of service in the Blue Helmets of United Nations peacekeeping began in 1978 in Lebanon with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, in which the Fijian battalion served for 24 years. In 1982 when the multinational force and observers were deployed as peacekeepers in Sinai, a Fijian battalion was among them and has remained there to this day. In Iraq, the guard unit of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has been manned by Fijians since 2004. With the planned withdrawal of the United States forces from Iraq this year, the United Nations has seen fit to increase the size of its UNAMI guard unit and, after due process, Fiji was selected to provide the extra personnel. We thank the United Nations for the confidence it has shown in our servicemen and servicewomen.

In addition, Fijian servicemen and servicewomen are currently stationed in peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, Abyei, Darfur, Liberia and Timor-Leste. I pause here to profess my country's recognition and respect for the selfless service given by United Nations peacekeepers in the troubled regions of our world, and to pay tribute to those of them who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Fiji is currently the Chair of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), whose membership includes Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front of New Caledonia. This year, the MSG was pleased to admit Indonesia and Timor-Leste to observer status. Fiji wishes to commend the work of our brother MSG missions at the United Nations in bringing Melanesian concerns to the attention of the United Nations Special Political and Decolonization Committee. Through its membership of the Decolonization Committee, Fiji will continue to call for the Committee to conduct effective monitoring and assessment of the progress of New Caledonia's Nouméa Accord. In this regard, we would welcome the establishment of arrangements for closer cooperation and information-sharing between the United Nations Secretariat and the MSG secretariat. We also express our gratitude to the Government of France for its cooperation and assistance to this end.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) continue to inspire our economic development efforts. In Fiji, we have concentrated our focus on national infrastructure development under our road map for democracy and sustainable socio-economic development. Under the road map, priority has been given to rural electrification expansion, access to clean water and to national road development. This focus is with a view to creating the bedrock required for sustainable economic growth.

Since the reform of Fiji's laws to bring them into line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, further progress has been achieved. We are experiencing increased participation by women in local decision-making bodies, thereby empowering rural women, increasing the enrolment of women and girls in tertiary education, gender mainstreaming within the Government system and increasing the provision of welfare assistance to the marginalized, including single mothers.

The Domestic Violence Decree, which came into effect last year, is now being effectively implemented by the law enforcement agencies in conjunction with civil society groups. Its regime of restraining orders is intended to deter perpetrators of family violence from inflicting further violence, while allowing families to remain together in peace. The Decree recognizes the difficulty experienced by women and children in gaining access to the justice system because of family, community, cultural and attitudinal barriers.

In order to address the MDG HIV/AIDS target, the Fijian Government enacted a new law this year that, among other things, safeguards the privacy and rights of persons infected or affected by HIV. The HIV/AIDS Decree is based on the United Nations international guidelines on HIV/AIDS and on the Declaration of Commitment to a human rights-based approach to dealing with the epidemic. The Decree has been acknowledged as one of the most progressive HIV laws in the world. Fiji participated in and was represented by our Head of State, His Excellency Ratu

Epeli Nailatikau, at the HIV/AIDS High-level Meeting that was held in this Hall in August.

In addition to the HIV/AIDS Decree, Fiji this year passed the Mental Health Decree, based on World Health Organization guidelines on best practice for mental patients, and the Child Welfare Decree, which creates a system that requires the mandatory reporting of child abuse by doctors, police officers and lawyers to the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Fiji is determined to provide to all Fijians enlightened and progressive laws on health care, access to health services and justice. A large percentage of Fiji's population is at risk of contracting a non-communicable disease (NCDs), or lifestyle disease, including cardiovascular or cancerous diseases. We welcome the high-level commitment of the international community to address this crisis and the successful completion of the High-level Meeting on NCDs this week. The Fijian Government has taken key actions to address NCD issues, including being the first country to sign and ratify the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. It is also one of the first countries to pilot a salt-reduction programme.

The economic reforms undertaken by the Fijian Government have produced positive mid-term results. Last month, we were heartened to learn that Fiji's economic standing was assessed at a higher level by the credit-rating agency Standard and Poor's. This improved rating is also attributable to the strong support of all development partners, including the private sector, which have worked closely with the Fijian Government. I wish to take this opportunity to thank them for their cooperation, assistance and collaboration.

As a small island developing State (SIDS) vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, Fiji has a strong desire to see positive and concrete outcomes achieved at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting in Durban later this year. We hold firm to the hope of a successful outcome from the UNFCCC negotiations. However, the urgency of the situation for many small island and low-lying coastal States, and the real threat posed by sea-level rise, prompted the Pacific SIDS to draw the attention of the Security Council to the security implications of climate change. Fiji hopes that the presidential statement adopted by the Council in July (S/PRST/2011/15*) at the end of the open debate on the security implications of climate change will enable the Council to look further into the plight of those countries that are most at risk of losing their territory to climate change.

As the first signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Fiji has kept its oceanic obligations at the core of its foreign policy. With the increasing interest in seabed mining, and in order to avoid a race to the bottom by countries wishing to exploit the untapped mineral resources on the ocean floor, it is imperative that the International Seabed Authority remain vigilant in safeguarding the environmental integrity of the world's seabeds. Fiji has invested much time and many resources in the responsible consideration of seabed mining, and thus welcomes the Advisory Opinion of the Seabed Disputes Chamber on the responsibilities and obligations of States parties with regard to seabed mining. We also welcome the decision by the Council of the International Seabed Authority to approve the application by Tonga and Nauru for the exploration of polymetallic nodules in the mid-east Pacific Ocean.

We see the Pacific small island developing States as legitimate participants in this oceanic resource. The Pacific Ocean is the mainstay of our country's livelihood, our food security and our economy. Fiji views the blue economy as an essential element of the green economy. In this regard, we consider the 2012 Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be critical to protecting that economy.

Since I last addressed the General Assembly (see A/65/PV.19), Fijians have benefited from the nation's Strategic Framework for Change. The Framework set in place the road map that will take Fiji to the holding of national elections by September 2014. Under the provisions of the road map, from September next year until 2013 our nation must turn its attention to the development of a new constitution premised along the laudable principles set out in the People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress. The road map clearly states that in the process the new Fijian constitution must do away with racial categorization and discrimination so that for the first time in Fiji's history, Fijians will go to elections in 2014 on the basis of common and equal suffrage. That will be real progress. It will undo decades of undemocratic laws and policies inherited from our colonial past and entrenched in past Constitutions that have impeded our nation's progress.

This is a determined move to create a society based on substantive equality and justice and respect for the dignity of all Fijians.

As we enter this formative two-year period in Fiji's history, we recognize that inclusiveness will be an essential part of the process in the formulation of the new constitution. We also recognize our national responsibility at all times to ensure that the nation's overall peace, well-being and sustainable economic development prevail over divisive factional interests. The Fijian nation will prevail, and we have every confidence that our beloved country has the homegrown ability to pull itself up by its own bootstraps. In this respect, I am happy to inform this gathering that electronic registration of voters for the national elections is scheduled to commence in January next year.

We trust that our trading and development partners, friends old and new, will give us the understanding, the space and the assistance we need to ensure that true and sustainable democracy can take root in Fiji. In this regard, we have taken great heart from recent assurances of support from many of our bilateral and multilateral friends, not least of which is the United Nations.

Once again, I offer my congratulations to the President on his election and my best wishes for a productive sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali.

Ms. Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Sidibé (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey the regrets of His Excellency Mr. Amadou Toumani Touré, President of the Republic of Mali, who, owing to a particularly busy national schedule at this time, was unable to attend the current session of the General Assembly. However, he asked me to convey his most cordial greetings and sincere wishes for the success of our work.

The Mali delegation is particularly pleased to convey to Mr. Al-Nasser its heartfelt congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. His election is not only a just recognition of his exceptional qualities as a seasoned diplomat, but also a tremendous tribute to his country, Qatar, with which Mali enjoys excellent relations. I therefore assure him of the support and full cooperation of my delegation in discharging his mission. Allow me also to express my great appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for the superb manner in which he presided over the sixty-fifth session, which has just ended, to the satisfaction of all Member States.

Finally, I should like to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his outstanding re-election as the head of the Organization. I remain fully convinced that his unswerving commitment to upholding the principles and ideals of the Organization and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals will help to strengthen further the role of the United Nations on the international scene.

The current global context is marked by profound political upheavals that gravely threaten international peace and security. This situation makes the theme chosen for the general debate — "The role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes" — all the more pertinent. I should therefore like first to stress the important role of mediation and the urgency of renewed collective efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and, above all, to put a halt to violence, the untold suffering inflicted on civilian populations, and the massive destruction of socio-economic infrastructure.

My country remains convinced that the prevention of conflicts and their resolution through mediation are undoubtedly guarantees of peace and lasting security. In that regard, Mali will continue to encourage and support all initiatives and mediation efforts under way with a view to combating the root causes of conflicts and paving the way to a lasting political solution able to guarantee peace, stability and security, without which there can be no socio-economic development. Part of this process are the promotion of good-neighbourly relations and peaceful coexistence, the non-use of force in dispute settlement, understanding and mutual respect, the bolstering of international cooperation, and the culture of peace and dialogue among religions and civilizations.

The events under way in the world are of concern to us in that they clearly demonstrate that the quest for peace and security remains the most pressing challenge. In Africa, while outstanding progress has been made in promoting peace, security and stability, the fact remains that the situation in the Horn of Africa and in North Africa, particularly in Libya, remains a source of major concern. Today more than ever, weapons and deadly confrontations must give way to the imperative of dialogue and national reconciliation, which are required to establish lasting peace, consolidate national unity and maintain territorial integrity.

In the Middle East, the Palestinian question is and remains a source of major concern to the international community, which must encourage the Israelis and Palestinians to take the steps necessary to establish a climate of trust and launch direct negotiations towards a comprehensive peace underpinned, inter alia, on the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. While reiterating its active solidarity and total support to the Palestinian people in their just, legitimate struggle, Mali will continue to support all initiatives towards the creation of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State living side by side and in peace with Israel within secure, internationally recognized borders.

International peace and security continue to be threatened by other phenomena, such as international terrorism, cross-border organized crime, and the traffic in weapons, drugs and human beings. The attacks perpetrated throughout the world are stark reminders that no country is safe from terrorism, and that no cause, howsoever just, can justify the deliberate use of violence against innocent civilians.

In that regard, I note the security challenges in the vast Sahelo-Saharan strip that Mali shares with several brother countries in the region. Our subregion faces today the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the trafficking of drugs and human beings fuelled by organized crime networks in collusion with terrorist groups. The events in Libya and their collateral effects could further aggravate this already worrisome situation.

Aware of the threats posed by these phenomena to the stability and harmonious development of the region, the Governments of the countries concerned have worked to establish joint operational mechanisms to combat our common enemies effectively. For its part, the Government of Mali reaffirms its full support for all initiatives of the States of the subregion seeking to better coordinate and harmonize our efforts to meet the multiple common challenges. Parallel to efforts at the subregional level, our Government is intensifying its efforts to implement the Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in Northern Mali.

The year 2012 will be an important one for Mali. After almost 20 years of democratic institutional practices, the President of the Republic, who will not stand for re-election, saw fit to revise the 1992 Constitution, following broad national consultations, in order to consolidate democracy, good governance and the rule of law in our country.

A participative, inclusive process has already been opened with all stakeholders — the Government, political parties, national deputies and civil society — to guarantee the transparency and credibility of future referendums and future. I reiterate the commitment of the Government to do its utmost to smoothly implement the envisaged reforms and meet the challenge of holding successful elections in 2012. I remain confident of success as our democracy has matured over the past four elections. This progress has been inspired from Malian culture based on dialogue, tolerance and sharing.

The people of Mali share the ambition of the Government to build a strong, united Mali — a democratic and stable Mali resolutely committed to peace, dialogue and international cooperation. They also share the determination of the Government to create the conditions for true prosperity in order to

make Mali an emerging economy in the medium term. That is why I solemnly call from this rostrum on the international community and development partners to support the electoral process under way and our efforts to meet the challenge of organizing a constitutional referendum and free, transparent and democratic elections.

As a Sahelo-Saharan country facing the phenomenon of desertification and unpredictable rainfall, Mali considers climate change to be one of the major challenges affecting the survival and development of humankind. That is why we are present at all meetings on this issue, as borne out by our recent participation at the High-level Meeting on the theme "Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication". I reaffirm Mali's commitment to continuing to step up its actions to preserve and conserve the soils, forests and fauna, in step with the national and international commitments of our country.

The sessions of the General Assembly also offer us a chance to take stock of the severity of other challenges facing the world. I think in particular of the struggle against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and non-communicable diseases, which were the subject of High-level Meetings on 19 and 20 September. In addition to the challenges they pose to public health, these scourges have become a real problem for development. The international community must, we believe, redouble its efforts and its vigilance to contain these illnesses. It will also have to deliver on its commitments to the developing countries in order to allow them to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

It is also important to give sustained attention to the issue of reform and democratization of the United Nations by giving a greater role to women in decision-making in political, economic and security forums. It is also important to democratize the international financial institutions, bearing in mind the huge changes that have taken place in the world and the need for better representation for all regions.

The global economic situation certainly remains fragile, but the financial crisis should not become a pretext for reducing official development assistance (ODA). The implementation of the Programme of Action for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals must remain a priority. The international community must revive its collective will to put into practice and even go beyond commitments undertaken in the field of ODA in order to combat poverty and all forms of injustice that breed violence and insecurity throughout the world.

Similarly, the implementation of the Istanbul Political Declaration and Programme of Action for the least developed countries (LDCs) for the decade 2011-2020 will allow the LDCs to marshal the necessary financial resources to ensure the lasting growth and development that guarantee peace and stability in the world. In that regard, Mali will continue to support all innovative initiatives in development financing, trade, the alleviation of foreign debt, and technology transfer to developing countries in general and LDCS in particular.

In our quest for a safer and more just, prosperous and peaceful world, the best way to guarantee our common future is to strengthen cooperation and international solidarity. Let us engage collectively to find lasting solutions to the challenges and complex problems facing humankind. It is in the interest of us all and in the interest of our collective survival.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

Mr. Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcome His Excellency Mr. Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): It is a great honour for me to address the Assembly on behalf of His Majesty

King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland. His Majesty King Mswati III, Her Majesty the Queen Mother, the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland send best wishes and congratulations to the State of Qatar and Mr. Al-Nasser on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We are confident that his wide experience and diplomatic skills will ensure success in the challenging issues that face this session. I should also like to commend the excellent work of his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss.

The founders of the United Nations envisaged an international Organization whose primary strength would rest in its Members acting collectively and cooperatively in resolving international problems. In this regard, the theme of this general debate, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means", pertinently captures the initial vision.

The pursuit of peace and security in many parts of the world is vital to a future of continued coexistence. We owe it to posterity to maintain a habitable world. International efforts to intervene and mediate in internal conflicts should not be taken lightly and interlocutors should be alert to the sensibilities involved in every specific situation. History has taught us that transplanted solutions never work successfully. There is no one-size-fits-all in the pursuit of peace because every situation and era is unique. The international community should also be quick to spot irrelevant forces that seek to champion narrow interests.

The Kingdom of Swaziland wishes to congratulate the Republic of South Sudan on the independence it obtained this year and celebrated on 9 July. Credit must also go to the Republic of the Sudan for its steadfast resolve to see to it that the process was successful. The efforts of the High-Level Panel on Darfur and the Panel of the Wise commissioned by the African Union are also acknowledged. The African Union has been instrumental in utilizing the vast experience of former leaders of Africa as it seeks to identify African solutions for African problems. My country wishes to reiterate its commitment to this concept.

For a similar reason, the Kingdom of Swaziland prays with the people of Libya that there will be a swift end to the current conflict and a sustainable solution that has the quest of peaceful resolution as the watchword when dealing with any transitional difficulties. In this regard, we look forward to the formation of an all-inclusive Government that will ensure that Libya moves towards a brighter future. The world needs a unified and stable Libya to resume its place in global affairs.

It would be remiss of me if I did not mention the hugely damaging long-term effects of the war in Somalia. The difficulties are now compounded by a terrible famine. While the blame might be placed on climate change, nevertheless we hold the view that Somalia would manage this latest humanitarian disaster — the famine — considerably better if the international community were to collaborate on a sustainable political solution, which is essential for economic recovery. Sadly the world appears to have forgotten Somalia, with only the African Union and other regional arrangements dealing with the effects of the war in that country.

The piracy problem, which has clearly deepened, is one of many signs that Somalia needs a comprehensive political intervention that involves all international interlocutors. There has been a great deal of support for the fight against piracy, but not as part of a more holistic approach. The world surely does not want to send the message that its interventions take place only when specific interests are threatened.

In the same spirit, the Kingdom of Swaziland encourages the Quartet on the question of Palestine to remain resolute in finding common ground between Israel and Palestine. We are well aware that there have been setbacks before, but we are optimistic that at the end of it all there will be a groundbreaking solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and harmony.

The Kingdom of Swaziland joins the rest of the world in its condemnation of terrorism and threats to international peace and security. In the same spirit, we recall the 9/11 criminal attacks that occurred 10 years ago and all who were affected. We therefore commend the Secretary-General for hosting the Symposium on International Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, which underscored the importance of greater international cooperation among States on a whole range of counter-terrorism topics, as covered in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We hope that the recommendations thereof will provide a source of

reference to all Member States, international organizations and relevant stakeholders.

The promotion and protection of human rights are a common objective of all countries. While great achievements have been made in international human rights cooperation since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, challenges still exist. As a developing country, we believe that greater importance should be attached to the right to development so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of globalization. The international community should pay more attention to economic, social and cultural rights — such as the right to life, the right to food and the right to health — and promote international cooperation in this regard. The developed countries should do more to honour their commitments in terms of development assistance, technology transfer, debt reduction and market access so as to create favourable conditions for the effective promotion of the universal realization of the right to development.

The Kingdom of Swaziland voted in favour of resolution 60/251, which established the Human Rights Council. We also formed part of the consensus on resolution 65/281 on the review of the Human Rights Council adopted this year. To this end, we also support the engagement of Member States in the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, which examines the human rights situation in all countries. Our country will be among those to be considered at the Universal Periodic Review in October 2011, and we look forward to engaging in an open and candid dialogue with other members of the Council.

Throughout the past session, we pursued many development topics, notably the High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS in June at which our political will to intensify our efforts to eliminate the scourge was reaffirmed. The Kingdom of Swaziland is proud to have made great strides in this regard. For example, the percentage of children born HIV-free to HIV-positive mothers enrolled in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission programme has risen to 83 per cent and is expected to reach 100 per cent by 2015.

In today's highly integrated and interconnected world, almost all issues demand the full participation of international partners. Taiwan is one of the leading economic and technological powerhouses of the world today, and the Kingdom of Swaziland is of the view that Taiwan can contribute successfully to the international community. We therefore urge the United Nations to find a suitable way to allow for Taiwan's meaningful participation in its specialized agencies and mechanisms, including the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. There is no doubt that the there is a functional need to include the people of Taiwan in the United Nations system and that their inclusion would be in the common interest of the international community.

In conclusion, may I say that the Kingdom of Swaziland has confidence in the initiatives already taken towards the renewal of this Organization and looks forward to a new dynamic and vibrant working period.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Information and Legal Affairs of Grenada

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Information and Legal Affairs of Grenada.

Mr. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Information and Legal Affairs of Grenada, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Information and Legal Affairs of Grenada, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Thomas (Grenada): I am honoured to extend congratulations to Mr. Al-Nasser on his appointment to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth regular session. As two small countries, Qatar and Grenada share much in common. Accordingly, we look forward to his leadership and stand ready to support him for the good of all the members of the General Assembly and the United Nations itself. We welcome

his theme on mediation because we believe that when mediation is properly applied it can minimize confrontation in the world. I also commend the outgoing President, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his stewardship and dedication during the past year. Grenada congratulates Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his election to a second term as Secretary-General and wishes him continued success.

Now in its thirty-seventh year of independence and membership of the United Nations, Grenada renews its commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter, believing that universal adherence to those principles provides guidance to the United Nations to act on what may seem intractable, for the United Nations is intended to lead, perhaps more so in difficult times.

Grenada supports the pursuit of international peace and security. We believe firmly in the rule of law, the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights. We also support the fight against terrorism, as well as the campaign against the illicit drug trade. All these pose serious threats to the security of our changing world. My Government reiterates its commitment to the United Nations Charter. In support of the role of the United Nations, this year the Government of Grenada has signed three global conventions, including the Convention on Cluster Munitions, helping to bring about disarmament.

We are all obliged to work selflessly to preserve our planet for future generations. The avoidance of nuclear confrontation is one sure way. We therefore congratulate all Governments that have expended much time and effort on nuclear non-proliferation.

Since we met a year ago, the world and the United Nations itself have faced many challenges — economic, social and political — all of which undermine stability and people's survival. The economic crisis continues to weigh heavily on Grenada. Our population is experiencing high food and fuel prices, national revenues have decreased, and debt continues to be high. The green shoots of recovery that others have experienced have not reached us. For us, the economic crisis of 2008 still rages and we must find a way out of it. Social and political strife remain, if not in Grenada, in other parts of the world. These demonstrate that the search for freedom and justice is far from over.

Human suffering and instability anywhere in the world hurt us all, even in tiny Grenada, where unemployment in major capitals affects our tourism and even our remittances from abroad. The major challenge facing Grenada as a small island developing State is how to reduce our weaknesses, how to increase our resilience, and how to pursue development for people today and for their children tomorrow.

How are we to respond? We must attempt to achieve growth with equity, especially for women and youth, and to support general improvements towards people's advancement — that is, create stable environments and opportunities for our people to thrive — and we must do so while contributing to a just, peaceful and democratic global framework. We believe that whatever the challenge, our common political will for fairness and justice must remain our overarching guiding principles in matters economic, social and political.

Grenada's main response so far has been to strengthen our democratic processes and to advance the Caribbean regional integration movement. At the national level, we promote social inclusion in the governance of the country that engages civil society, the media and the people as a whole. We have instituted consultations and participation in major policy and legislative matters, including the revision of old laws and the making of new ones. At the regional level, we are working with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), two groupings that constitute the unbreakable link with our national undertakings and how we engage internationally.

Grenada's efforts to achieve sustainable development can be helped by both the December 2011 Durban Climate Change Conference and the June 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Grenada appeals to all parties to negotiate seriously and to meet commitments at both of these Conferences. These global meetings must bring added value to the ongoing efforts of Grenada and other developing countries, especially small States. Durban 2011 and Rio+20 must surely deliver meaningful and attainable outcomes, including fulfilling old obligations and delivering on new ones, especially on climate financing and the broader financing for development.

Developed countries must meet their commitments to poorer nations. At the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancún last year we made some progress on climate change and we must build on that. We welcome the establishment of the Transitional Committee of the Green Climate Fund and hope to see it capitalized and fully launched in Durban. We are deeply disappointed that some countries are blocking the mandated review of 1.5 degrees Celsius as the potential global average warming limit. We call on those States to withdraw their objections and support the movement to a safe threshold for islands and for the world. We are convinced that an adequate global response to climate change must remain at the top of the global agenda. A legally binding outcome must be part of the outcome of climate negotiations.

I call on partners to hasten the disbursement of fast-start funds, especially to small island States. These disbursements must be consistent with the scale of the damage already done and the continuing threats that we face from environmental degradation. We express solidarity with our Pacific sisters and brothers, who are daily losing territory to sea-level rise, perhaps faster than we are in the Caribbean. They have my pledge that we will continue to support them.

Naturally, we are taking responsibility for ourselves. This year we are launching a sustainable energy programme for 24 small island developing States. The Small Island Developing States Sustainable Energy Initiative (SIDS DOCK) will provide the foundation for low carbon economic growth and adaptation to climate change. It will facilitate energy efficiency and provide renewable energy to 24 small island developing States. On behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States I thank the Government and people of Denmark for making the first contribution of an initial US$ 14.5 million to SIDS DOCK. We also thank our partners the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme for facilitating the programme. We invite the international community to join Denmark in financing this effort.

In a similar vein to our climate change efforts, we look to the Rio+20 meeting to advance our path to sustainability. One of the key outcomes for Grenada and other SIDS must be the development of a green economy, one that combines investments, jobs and livelihoods with environmental resources; and a blue economy, one that takes into account coastal- and ocean-based income generation. For indeed, peoples' livelihoods are largely based on environmental resources and services, including agriculture, agro-industries, forestry, mining and tourism. The Rio+20 meeting can and must be a turning point for political commitment and financing for development.

We know that the United Nations is capable of leadership. However, it can be more effective if it anticipates and responds to twenty-first century challenges. That includes recognizing the fact that dozens of mature States, many in the developing world, are ready and able to take responsibility for the management of the global agenda. The United Nations must be reformed. How else will it support its growing agenda? How else can it manage this new global agenda for global sustainability, peace and peacekeeping and disaster response within a democratic multilateral system that is constantly evolving? What worked for 65 years must be reshaped for today. That is why we call for reform of the Security Council to make it more representative and inclusive. Failure to do this will deny that body the political legitimacy it needs to maintain and indeed enhance its leadership role in the world and to make the best decisions. Grenada joins with other member States in the Caribbean Community and calls for expansion of the Security Council in both its permanent and non-permanent categories and more openness in its working methods. We call for a Security Council seat for small island States within a reasonable time frame and we also call for stronger and more enhanced United Nations-CARICOM relations to benefit the people of our Caribbean region.

Grenada welcomes the formation and launch of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which is aimed at promoting the rights of women and girls and equality between the sexes. That is an early success of United Nations reform.

Grenada is firmly committed to the principle of self-determination. On 14 July Grenada joined with other Member States in welcoming the Republic of South Sudan as the 193rd Member of the United Nations. We salute the efforts of its people to usher in peace at home and within the region.

I turn now to the seemingly intractable problem of moving Palestine from a State-in-waiting to an

internationally recognized State. This cannot be separated from the international clamour for democratic rights now led by the Arab Spring. The just aspirations of the people of Palestine must be addressed, and Palestine must not be left behind in the historical sweep towards open and sustainable democracies. Equally, the Arab Spring should also be the occasion for the renewal of a commitment to Israel's security. Peace depends on viable democracies and sustained security. That is why Grenada is disappointed that the Palestinians and Israelis have not concluded talks over their long-standing dispute. We urge a return to these talks and look forward to the peaceful coexistence of these two States.

It is quite obvious that the world continues to experience the wrath of nature. We grieve at the waste of human life and the environmental destruction caused by disasters worldwide. We express our solidarity to Member States that have experienced floods, earthquakes, tsunamis and droughts in the past months. Grenada calls for a strong global response especially for the humanitarian crisis now unfolding in the Horn of Africa.

Grenada welcomes the new President of the sister CARICOM State of Haiti and wishes him and his team success as they rebuild Haiti after the devastation of the earthquake. While we thank all those who have helped, much still remains to be done. We call on all who have pledged to help Haiti to deliver on their pledges and support the efforts of the Haitian people. Turning now to another Caribbean concern, Grenada again urges the United States of America to completely lift the harsh economic embargo against the people of Cuba. All but a handful of the United Nations membership have consistently voted for the removal of that embargo.

We acknowledge that responding to the complex and interconnected issues on the United Nations agenda is a major task, even for the United Nations. Nevertheless, responding must be at the top of the United Nations agenda. We maintain support for sustainable development, action on climate change, and support for justice and peace. Grenada commends the Secretary-General for organizing a number of high-level meetings on important topics. We are moved to single out the High-level Meeting on non-communicable diseases. This scourge is negatively affecting not just developing countries but many developed countries as well. The proliferation of non-communicable diseases poses a very serious challenge to small island States like Grenada because of their effects on the labour force and demands on the shrinking finances of the country. We therefore welcome the outcome of the High-level Meeting and we pledge to implement its recommendations.

Finally, last year, building on the conclusion that the United Nations is a real force for good in the world, I challenged the Organization to harness its strength to better achieve that purpose. This year, drawing on the message of youth to make the world a better place, I repeat that call. It is my hope that, under the stewardship of the President, the General Assembly — and the United Nations as a whole — will continue to be the main global force for the good of humanity. Grenada will do its part to advance this singular and inspiring goal.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Information and Legal Affairs of Grenada for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Information and Legal Affairs of Grenada, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Gusmão (Timor-Leste) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): It is a great pleasure for me to be back at the United Nations Headquarters. Last February I had the honour of taking part in a Security Council meeting, where I took the opportunity to thank the permanent members and all

other nations that have been part of the Council for the generosity and care that have always been present in the resolutions on Timor-Leste. Today, on behalf of the people of Timor-Leste, I want to take this opportunity to thank all Members of this forum for the support they have given to Timor-Leste in the promotion of peace and security and in the building of our national institutions. I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that we have come a long way as a people and as a State, replacing intolerance with constructive dialogue and the right to protest with the duty to protest responsibly. We have taken firm steps to put the difficult circumstances of the past behind us, and we have renewed the confidence of the Timorese people in the institutions of the State. As such we have already endorsed the Joint Transition Plan for the withdrawal of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste by the end of 2012.

We are in the last year of the five-year mandate of the Coalition Government that I have the honour of leading — the Parliamentary Majority Alliance (AMP), which includes five different political parties. Under the Constitution of Timor-Leste the Government is determined either by the party with the most elected representatives or by an alliance of parties with a parliamentary majority, as it is our National Parliament that is elected directly by the people and not the Government itself. A government can be constituted only if it is supported by a parliamentary majority. Following the 2007 elections the party with the most parliamentary representatives did not have a majority in its own right, so the President of the Republic, after formally meeting with all parties, endorsed a coalition government in order to provide the best opportunity for stable government. This constitutional option served the best interests of the nation, as we were living in a period of great fragility at that time as demonstrated by the instability and violence that were the consequences of the 2006 crisis.

Having inherited an unstable national situation, the AMP Government focused on restoring peace and stability and resolving the many social and political problems that stemmed from the 2006 crisis and continued into 2008. We were determined to put an end to the violent outbreaks that began in 2000 and were repeated every two years, as though Timor-Leste was trapped in a vicious cycle of violence. The key to breaking the cycle was to acknowledge and admit that we had failed. We had to address the root causes of our problems and learn to deal with the frailty of our State institutions. Fortunately we were successful in conveying a strong political message about the need for stability. The AMP Government committed itself to a reform agenda and by governing through dialogue was able to: initiate vital reforms in the defence and security sectors, including capacity-building and professionalizing the police and defence forces; implement structural reforms in the State Administration's management; create systems and structures to ensure good governance, while continuing to support capacity-building in the justice sector; introduce fairer social policies to reduce the imbalance that existed in the society, taking into account the physical, moral and psychological damage of a 24-year-long war, and here I am speaking about veterans and the elderly, who sacrificed themselves for our independence and who, directly or indirectly, have suffered the consequences of a devastating war; encourage structured policies on education, health and agriculture; and promote a coherent economic policy throughout Timor-Leste to encourage the fledgling private sector.

In 2009, on the tenth anniversary of the referendum, the Government launched a new motto: "Goodbye conflict, welcome development". The people of Timor-Leste embraced this motto wholeheartedly. In looking forward to the period 2011-2020 we are confident that we are now truly becoming a more stable and tolerant society that is peaceful by nature. We also have the necessary optimism to initiate a bolder period of development.

Over the past four years we have been strengthening the institutional capacity of our public administration to defend the best interests of the State, improve public-service delivery, and promote good governance.

We have introduced reforms in the area of public finance management and we have created a Civil Service Commission. We have also created an Anti-Corruption Commission and begun to establish a Chamber of Accounts to promote transparency and accountability in our public accounts. Earlier this year we launched an on-line transparency portal and procurement portal providing access to data that is updated daily and that deals with the process of the Timor-Leste State general budget and its execution. These portals also allow public consultation on advertised public projects.

We have also begun to develop the capacity of our private sector by promoting competence, professional honesty and technical skills. Our aim is to transform the private sector into a strong partner with Government at this crucial period when we are building our country. Across the country we have invested in agriculture to increase the productivity of the sector, as well as local and decentralized development programmes focused on minor infrastructure projects to promote employment for young people in rural areas. Such measures have contributed to our economic growth and helped create jobs in the capital, Dili, and in rural areas, and they have encouraged confidence in our State institutions and led to a spirit of optimism that has contributed to a change in mindset.

Timor-Leste is a country blessed with great natural wealth, which means that we have the financial capacity to improve the living conditions of our people. However, we know that countries rich in natural resources often perform below their economic potential and are more vulnerable to conflict and more susceptible to bad governance. As such, transparency and good governance, which are essential in any country, become even more imperative for countries that are rich in natural resources. Currently, the Petroleum Fund of Timor-Leste has a balance of $8.9 billion. We are the first country in Asia and the third in the world to be compliant with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. As a result of our good governance and prudent use of revenue, Timor-Leste has had double-digit growth in the past few years. We believe that we are on the path to maintain this growth, and we are confident that the institutions we have established to support the Fund will become stronger, ensuring responsiveness and greater quality of work and execution. We will diversify the investment of our Petroleum Fund equally in bonds and equities to guarantee long-term sustainability, so that future generations will benefit in the same way as the current post-war generation.

Having achieved our goal of stability we were in a position to prepare a 20-year strategic development plan, which would replace the annual plan for each fiscal year. The plan covers three vital areas — social capital, infrastructure and economic development. In terms of economic development we are focused on three strategic industry sectors — the hydrocarbon industry, the agriculture sector and tourism. We want to shift from an oil-dependent economy to a non-oil-dependent economy. All the strategies and actions set out in the plan aim to transform Timor-Leste from a low-income country to an upper middle-income country with a healthy, well-educated and safe population that is prosperous and self-sufficient in terms of food. This new paradigm requires public investment in infrastructure and services and a dynamic private sector. Many emerging economies, particularly in the Asian region, have been growing despite the serious international financial crisis.

Next year will be very important for us to consolidate our process of State-building and to affirm ourselves as a sovereign, tolerant and democratic nation. In 2012 we will hold presidential and legislative elections, the third democratic elections in Timor-Leste, which I am confident will be conducted peacefully. Next year we will also celebrate vital historic dates that connect us to the more recent past, namely, the struggle for independence, and to older roots that make us unique within the region and the world.

In addition to celebrating the tenth anniversary of the restoration of independence, in 2012 we will also celebrate the centenary of the Manufahi Revolt and the 500-year anniversary of the arrival of the first Portuguese navigators in Timor-Leste. I should like to take this opportunity to invite all to take part in these celebrations, in the same spirit of thanks and solidarity as the invitation that we extended to our independence celebrations in 2002. We were not alone on that important date, and we continue to benefit from the generosity and support of nations throughout the world. We are pleased to continue to strengthen and to expand our ties of solidarity with friendly countries from various continents with different stories, different beliefs and different ethnicities.

We are trying to be more active in our region and in the world, showing that it is possible to leave behind, or to close, a period of conflict, even a long period, and to focus our energy on humanist ideals of political and social tolerance for the dignity and development of all. That is why we are intent on joining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Timor-Leste desires peace and shares the spirit of cooperation that led to the creation of that regional organization. We are also continuing to build upon our relationships with our friends in Asia and the Pacific,

including China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, among others.

Timor-Leste is strongly committed as well to its membership in the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries which consists of nations and peoples from the four corners of the world. We are observers in the Pacific Islands Forum and we have a good relationship with the European Union, which provides significant support and assistance. Next week I will make an official visit to Portugal, which shares ties with Timor-Leste that go back hundreds of years. Despite being in one of the worst economic and financial crises in its history, exacerbated by the global and European financial crisis, Portugal remains a steadfast partner of Timor-Leste and has strengthened its bilateral cooperation in several areas. The first Timorese military personnel are being trained in Portugal and will be integrated into the Portuguese contingent that will participate in the peacekeeping mission in Lebanon under the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

Timor-Leste is one of the 50 States classified as a least developed country (LDC). We are also called a fragile State. That classification stems from institutional, political, economic, social and other factors. In April last year we had the honour to host an international dialogue in Dili on the subject of "Peace-building and State-building" with the participation of LDCs from the group we call the Group of Seven Plus (g7+), which is at present chaired by Timor-Leste. This group is a forum that allows fragile and post-conflict countries to come together and talk about themselves, learn from each other's experiences and create new possibilities for facing the future with determination and optimism. The g7+ consists of 17 member countries covering around 350 million people from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The g7+ also aims to improve the transparency and efficiency of international aid. The group is a mechanism for dialogue with each other and with the international community about aid programmes and aid effectiveness. It should also be noted that fragile States require a period of transition with greater flexibility in donor funding, instead of a policy of one size fits all, which can only interfere with the individual processes of each country.

A high-level forum on development assistance is scheduled to take place next November in Pusan, South Korea. In that forum we will evaluate progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and will also set new action frameworks. Under-developed countries focus on meeting Millennium Development Goals every day, although it will be very difficult to meet them by 2015. These countries face daily challenges and difficulties in pursuing objectives to combat poor administration and reduce poverty. Democracy is a process and not an end in itself. Most of these countries are young democracies and have the arduous task of changing the mindset of their people scarred by conflict. They must also deal with internal and external pressures that prevent them from paying too much attention to a series of universal criteria that are too idealized or standardized and not adjusted to the actual situation of those countries. Understanding the specific circumstances of each developing country and motivating the people to cultivate a spirit of hope and belonging will surely yield more results than forcing situations where receiving countries cannot immediately meet the conditions imposed on them, thereby being put in a situation of moral, psychological, political and financial dependency, which does little to help them move towards development.

It is in that context of balanced and sustained development that I raise the issue of aid effectiveness. Poor countries also need a message of confidence, since all they hear about is transparency and accountability. Still, the international economic recession proves that the lessons taught by those with all the power, the knowledge and the money may not always be the best. Therefore, I believe that we must all — poor countries and donor countries — change our attitudes. The United Nations has a vital role to play here in terms of correcting and adjusting aid to actual and local realities.

We remain divided into North and South, into rich and poor, into Westerners and Arabs, into Asians and Africans, into Muslims and non-Muslims, and into Christians and non-Christians. Even today many of the people who hold or influence power still have a Cold War mentality. We need a new world order that is also political and economic, where conflicts and discord are replaced by dialogue, where democracy is used to give voice to the weak and vulnerable and where aid and solidarity are used appropriately to mitigate the suffering of the people. We have to give voice to the peoples of the world and listen to their aspirations. Only through dialogue can we fight violence, which

causes all kinds of misery. Only through peaceful solutions can we prevent the massive destruction caused by war.

The people of Timor-Leste, who have experienced the pain caused by destruction and violence, hope that their brothers and sisters throughout the world who are suffering today because of conflicts may find peace. However, as everyone says, peace is not only the absence of war, true peace comes from within, the peace of spirit. Therefore, I appeal to the United States of America to demonstrate greatness of spirit and humanism and eliminate the Cuban embargo that has existed for more than 25 years.

Lastly, in 1991 I was still in the mountains leading the resistance when the Western Sahara referendum was first proposed. I was in prison in 1995 when Yasser Arafat, Shimon Perez and Yitzak Rabin received the Nobel Peace Prize. Two Timor-Leste citizens also received the Nobel Peace Prize, and Indonesia accepted the referendum result, just as North Sudan did.

We hope that the people of Western Sahara and Palestine can find more viable, fair and realistic ways through mechanisms that will lead them effectively to the resolution of their conflicts, which, sadly, are becoming the oldest conflicts in the world. We all need to reform our mindsets, attitudes and institutions. We all must start these reforms within our own nations, but I should like to suggest a common challenge here, that these reforms begin right here in this building at the headquarters of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Stavros Lambrinidis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.

Mr. Lambrinidis (Greece) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank the outgoing President of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Joseph Deiss of Switzerland, and congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar on his election as President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. May I also express my gratitude for the efforts and leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has skilfully guided our Organization in these difficult and demanding times.

(*spoke in English*)

Two world wars taught humanity the necessity to infuse national relations with respect for a few simple yet powerful ideals. That is what the United Nations is all about — respect for peace and good-neighbourly relations; respect for the rule of law and the international justice system; and respect for the fundamental right of every person on this planet to have a chance for a better life. The United Nations is what we, its Member States, make of it. We are the driving force behind its accomplishments. We are the reason behind any of its failures. The United Nations is where we meet and agree or disagree on global cooperation, and when we agree, humanity becomes stronger.

Today the United Nations is leading vital international cooperation in tackling climate change and desertification. There is also the challenge of non-communicable diseases, which hinder macroeconomic development and keep the bottom billions of people locked in chronic poverty. Unregulated migration is putting huge pressure on some countries, including Greece, as a result of — even to the further detriment of — the low level of development in the countries of origin, poverty and wars. There is the crucial contribution of the United Nations and its Human Rights Council on human rights issues, a contribution that can grow with a stronger mandate for the Human Rights Council. Greece is standing for election to the Council for the 2012 term and deeply values the support of every single one of its partners in that effort.

Perhaps the most overarching responsibilities of the United Nations lie in the area of peace and security, for without peace and security it is much more difficult, if not impossible, to pursue the myriad other goals of the Organization. Those goals include ensuring nuclear security, combating terrorism and combating piracy. They also include managing crises as they arise, as in the recent case of Libya, and working together with our partners in the international community to establish and keep peace. This also

means, as I said earlier, fostering good-neighbourly relations the world over.

Just as we need to work together as global partners to face the challenges of our time and the challenges of the future, each of us also has a role to play in a given region. Greece's immediate region is South-East Europe, the Balkans. Greece has a vision for peace, stability and cooperation in our region. Its key component is the European perspective of our region as a whole and of our individual neighbours. To this end, two years ago Greece launched Agenda 2014, which is aimed at revitalizing our neighbours' efforts to realize European aspirations, on the one hand, while also re-igniting the European Union's vision of welcoming the countries of the Balkans into the European family. Indeed, creating a European neighbourhood of peace and cooperation in south-eastern Europe should be our collective goal, and that is because peace and cooperation are anything but a foregone conclusion in the Balkans. Recent history, often bloody history, makes that abundantly clear.

There are still pending issues that need to be resolved. One serious obstacle to the consolidation of peace and security in our neighbourhood is the Kosovo issue. Recent progress in the European Union-brokered talks between Belgrade and Pristina gives some cause for optimism in the wake of the tensions we saw in the region over the summer. Those tensions remain. They still need to be dealt with and defused. Greece wishes to facilitate the process of reconciliation and compromise. It wishes to foster the kind of understanding that our neighbourhood needs on the path to its common future in the European family. That is a policy that works. Regional cooperation platforms, the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Black Sea Economic Coordination Organization, the regional Cooperation Council and others are bringing us closer together as partners. Serbia has made impressive progress on its path to the European Union, progress that must be recognized without question marks. So has Montenegro. Bosnia and Herzegovina must be supported in its efforts towards reconciliation, unity and progress. Albania is in the process of overcoming internal divisions and returning to the path of reforms under specific European Union criteria. Croatia's success story gives impetus to the entire enlargement process for the Balkans.

Another issue that needs our attention is that of the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which is not really and has never been a name issue per se, but instead a sincere effort to ensure that in our volatile region we put behind us, once and for all, notions of irredentism, of attempting to rewrite history and borders, so that our children can be raised not with suspicions and bitterness towards each other but with friendship and hope for living next to each other. Greece believes, and has repeatedly stated, that the solution lies in a fair compromise, in a name with a geographical qualifier since Macedonia is a geographic region that overlaps the territory of more than one country, and that this name must be used in relation to everyone, erga omnes. We want to resolve this issue so that we can finally realize the huge potential of our relationship on the basis of openness, honesty and trust. It is high time to reach a successful and mutually beneficial conclusion. As I have often said, this should be a time to write history, not to keep trying to rewrite it.

South-East Europe is only one side of Greece's neighbourhood. In our southern neighbourhood, the eastern Mediterranean, we have witnessed the awakening of people's desire for democracy, the hope for a better future. We have witnessed the Arab Spring. Our proximity to the region and to the countries there that have been swept by calls for change is reflected in our active presence in the region. Add to that a long-standing tradition of relations of trust and friendship with the Arab world and Members can see why Greece has embraced a vital role in these developments.

In Libya we conducted unprecedented evacuations for tens of thousands of non-Libyans, provided ground support for the implementation of the Libya no-fly zone, mediated the release of European military personnel early in the crisis and established a diplomatic presence early on in Benghazi to liaise with the National Transitional Council. We are now offering infrastructure on Crete as a staging area for the efforts to deal with the humanitarian situation in Libya. The importance we attach to developments in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and throughout the region derives from the point I made earlier. Without peace and security one does not have cooperation, the cooperation needed for development and for improving the day-to-day lives of the people.

We, as the international community, have an obligation to help our southern neighbours achieve their goal of democracy, of having a voice in their affairs and of hope and future prosperity. I am talking

about the same rights that the Syrian people have also been demanding for months, the rights that their own leadership is at present violently denying them. The Arab world does not need new hegemons who see the present turmoil as an opportunity to promote self-serving agendas or for establishing new spheres of geostrategic influence or economic power. It needs genuine friends who see Arabs as equals and who are willing selflessly to assist the Arab world in its transition to democracy and true self-determination. Greece and the European Union, under the guidance of the United Nations, can and must play that role.

Nowhere is the lack of peace and security more pronounced and more chronic than with regard to the Palestinian question. Greece supports unequivocally Palestine's right to statehood. It is now our responsibility, the responsibility of every Member State of the United Nations, to respect the Palestinian decision to request membership and, more importantly, to turn this into an opportunity that will jump-start new, direct negotiations. Palestine has a right to exist finally as an independent State, just as Israel — let us not forget — has an equal right to exist in full and uncompromised security. The European Union, on its own account and within the Quartet, has a crucial role to play in this effort. Greece will continue to engage in dialogue with both sides and support Catherine Ashton and the European Union's efforts within the Quartet and with the parties.

Within this context of regional tension and volatility but also great potential hope, it should be self-evident that we need to avoid adding still greater tensions in the eastern Mediterranean region, which is why we are deeply concerned by the recent threats and hostile actions against the Republic of Cyprus by our neighbour Turkey, in violation of international law. As the European Union, the United States, Russia and others have already stated, Turkey's threats and actions over the past few days and weeks are contrary to international law and they must cease. We believe that the path of tension is a wrong and dangerous path. Instead of threats our region needs strong countries that can work together to promote stability, cooperation and good-neighbourly relations among all, and always within the confines of international law.

That is the hope and example that we can give to a region and that a region expects of us, which is why Greece is committed to the peaceful path of exploratory talks with Turkey for the delimitation of a continental shelf, failing which we believe we should submit the issue to the International Court of Justice for resolution. We expect Turkey to refrain from actions that undermine that spirit of cooperation. That is why we strongly support the United Nations sanction talks currently under way between President Christofias of Cyprus and Mr. Eroglu, talks aimed at the reunification of Cyprus as a bizonal, bicommunal federation and the ending of Turkey's illegal occupation in accordance, with United Nations resolutions and European Union law.

Finally, economic development and fair distribution of wealth are key prerequisites for long-term stability and security. My country, in the midst of its own worst financial and economic crisis in recent history, has not only not shut itself in its shell but remains a leading investor in a region, especially in the western Balkans, contributing to the creation of tens of thousands of jobs. Internally we are overhauling our economy by investing in sustainable growth and in Greece's competitive advantage sectors, including green energy, shipping, tourism, sustainable agriculture and high-tech infrastructure. Externally, our businesses are becoming even more outward-looking. The economic integration of our region along the growth axes I have described, and other complementary ones, is certain to multiply its economic potential. It is thus certain further to enhance the peaceful integration and cooperation of all of its people.

It has often been said that every crisis is also an opportunity. If that is true, then our region, riddled as it has been for decades with big and small crises, is arguably today the region in the world that harbours the greatest opportunities for peace, growth and stability. It is in our hands to make this happen. Let us begin.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria.

Mr. Mladenov (Bulgaria): Let me begin by praising His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdelaziz Al-Nasser for his steady stewardship as the President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. In his work he can count on the constructive engagement of the Bulgarian delegation. Allow me also personally to praise him for the theme he has chosen for this session. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his

outstanding leadership of the previous session's busy agenda. Last but not least, let me congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his reappointment to the helm of the United Nations. He has proven himself to be a diligent, hard-working leader who believes strongly in consensus and harmony, qualities that the United Nations needs now in its top administrator and will undoubtedly need even more in years to come.

I begin by welcoming the work of delegations at the United Nations High-level Meeting on non-communicable diseases. Cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are now responsible for more deaths than all other causes combined. Bulgaria welcomes the negotiated final document. More than 80 per cent of cardiovascular and diabetes deaths, almost 90 per cent of deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and more than two thirds of all cancer deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. Bulgaria also particularly welcomes the High-level Meeting on nuclear safety and security. The effects of nuclear accidents have no respect for national borders. To adequately safeguard our people we must have firm international consensus and action, as well as agreement on stringent international safety standards.

Today we stand on the doorstep of historic change in the Middle East, the scale of which can only be compared to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the sweeping transformation of Central and Eastern Europe after the end of communism. Both processes are quite different but share a fundamental similarity — people have come out of the bondage of fear. Although the circumstances in each country are different, the root causes for what is happening in the Middle East are quite similar. Corrupt leadership breeds dissent, and with no democratic process in place, that dissent pours out on to the streets. Young people want to be engaged in the future of their countries, not forced into a world of virtual reality by frowning aging dictators. Millions of people who live on the brink of poverty and see a privileged few reap the benefits of economic freedom will demand fair economic opportunities for all.

Add to that the feeling of revival and the demand of millions of young Arabs to be respected, and you have the makings of a revolution of Arab dignity and self-respect, an historic revolution indeed. As change swept across the Middle East and North Africa, some leaders cringed in fear, others embraced it. Those who opposed their people are no longer in positions of power, and their countries are moving on and looking to democratic elections. Those who embraced change have initiated far-reaching reforms and responded to the legitimate demands of their people. His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan and His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco should to be commended for their vision and willingness to reform. They have shown the way forward.

At the same time, the international community has been appalled by the developments in Syria. Instead of responding to the legitimate demands of the Syrian people for the fulfilment of promised reforms, the Government cracked down violently on protesters. The protesters did not have unrealistic demands. They did not ask for anything out of the ordinary. According to the United Nations more than 2,600 people have been killed since March. The Government in Damascus questions those numbers. Even if only one person had been killed, it would have been one person too many.

The responsibility for repression lies squarely with the authorities and no one else. I use this opportunity to call on President Al-Assad, who has made many promises to his people and the international community, to come out from the shadows, change the Constitution, dismantle the machinery of repression and immediately call for internationally supervised elections. The people of Syria have the right to elect their own Government and hold it accountable. The time for transition has come.

At this session we welcomed the 193rd Member of the United Nations. Our hearts go out to the people of South Sudan, who have struggled for independence, and we commend the visionary leadership of their Government for paving the way for their independence in a peaceful manner. We also welcomed the new representatives of a free Libya, free from the oppression of the Al-Qadhafi dictatorship. It was at the gates of Benghazi in February that the international community, acting on a mandate of the United Nations Security Council, acted swiftly to prevent a massacre and protect civilians against attacks from their own Government.

The people of Libya proved that they could stand up and defend their right to freedom. Our thoughts go out to the families of all those who lost their lives in this struggle and fell victim to the crazed ambitions of a deluded dictator. Bulgaria stands ready to assist the

people of Libya in rebuilding their country. Our friendship is strong and has been tested through the years.

We know at first hand the brutality that Al-Qadhafi was capable of. The five Bulgarian nurses and a doctor who spent eight years of their lives in a Libyan jail, much of it on death row, are still haunted by their tortures. Let me quote one of them who recently said in an interview, "We died every time the cell door opened." Now safely back home, they need to be able to close that chapter of their nightmares. Like the nurses, innocent victims of a brutal dictatorship, the Libyan people do want to see justice, not revenge. Such justice will be sought when the dictator and his cronies are brought before a court of law.

No matter how successful we are individually we cannot truly enjoy the fruits of our own development if we live in an insecure environment. Regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations are vital for the well-being of our countries and our societies. Let me turn briefly to the Balkans.

The European Union was created to make war impossible in a continent that has seen at least a century of conflicts. Europe will not be whole and complete until our neighbours in the Balkans are part of our Union. It falls to us to say it loud and clear: to make war impossible in the Balkans we must see all countries that have emerged from the former Yugoslavia as part of the European Union. That is our historic mission. It is our destiny. That is why we will continue to work tirelessly to remove the obstacles to European Union enlargement in the Balkans, to strengthen regional cooperation and develop good-neighbourly relations in a region that has seen too much division and violence.

With particular vigour, we will continue to encourage the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Bulgaria welcomes the pragmatic approach taken by both Kosovo and Serbia during their first meetings. It is important that they build on this momentum and continue to engage in a constructive and pragmatic manner. All must show restraint and prevent the build-up of tension. That is vital for the security, prosperity and, ultimately, the European perspective of the region.

Bulgaria is a country that has a proud and turbulent history. Our history teaches us that nations are strong when their civic spirit is strong. It teaches us that you must find pride not only in great historic battles and ancient legends but in great feats of civic activism, in standing up for your values and protecting your neighbours. One such inspiring example is the fact that the Jews of Bulgaria survived the Second World War because hundreds of religious and community leaders, politicians, ordinary men and women, stood up and refused to be part of Hitler's madness. My country today is the product of the traditions of Christians, Jews and Muslims, who all form the fabric of the Bulgarian nation. That is our richness and makes us quite unique in the Balkans. That is why we cannot remain uninterested in developments in the Middle East, particularly with regard to the elusive prospects for peace between the people of Israel and the people of Palestine.

Over the course of the past year, we have seen the tireless efforts of the United States Administration and the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Mrs. Catherine Ashton, trying to find a way to resume direct negotiations. Those efforts, including the agreed Quartet statement of today, need to be applauded, encouraged and supported by all. It was in the United Nations in 1947 that the State of Israel was born. It was born as a home for the Jewish people, a beacon of hope for a community that had been persecuted and oppressed for thousands of years. Today, the landscape is changing. Slowly but surely the region is moving towards democracy. Democracy, accountable government and the rule of law are ultimately in the long-term interests of all, Jews and Muslims, Arabs and Israelis.

The Palestinian people have a right to a State of their own. Indeed we, the international community, have an obligation to support the establishment of a viable and democratic Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza: a Palestine that lives side-by-side with the State of Israel, a Palestine that lives in security and mutual recognition with the State of Israel, a Palestine that has secure borders based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed land swaps.

Both Palestine, as the home of the Palestinian people, and Israel, as the home of the Jewish people, must guarantee that all ethnic and religious groups have full rights and protection under law. Let me also make one point very clear. To refuse the right of Israel to exist means to refuse the right of the Palestinian people to have a State of their own. I can accept criticism of the policies of any Government but I

cannot stand idly by when the right of existence is denied to anyone, no matter what their religion or ethnicity is. To dismiss the importance of such policies would mean to fail the very values of our civilization. Bulgaria will never accept that, nor should any other nation in the global community.

Bulgaria believes very strongly that the definitive solution to peace can only come through direct negotiations, but direct negotiations can resume only on the basis of trust and a real understanding of the security concerns and legitimate aspirations of both sides. Rebuilding trust between both parties is a prerequisite to resuming negotiations. Unilateral action, changing the realities on the ground cannot be a substitute for negotiations.

Obstacles should be overcome, and preconditions should be removed. If the leaders of Palestine believe that the settlement policy is an obstacle to peace, the leaders of Israel must refrain from such activities in order to give peace a chance. If the leaders of Israel believe that no preconditions to a final settlement should be put in place, then the Palestinian leaders must refrain from such actions to give peace a chance.

Bulgaria recognized the Palestinian State in 1988. We hold our friendship with both Israel and the Palestinian people dear. That is why we urge the immediate resumption of negotiations as the only road to peace. Bringing both sides to the negotiating table remains our top priority. I am sure that the United States, working in concert with the European Union, can facilitate this process based on a vision outlined by President Obama.

Allow me to turn briefly to my delegation's vision for the kind of leadership, the kind of United Nations we need for the next decade. An Organization created by 51 Member States functions today with 193 Members.

In order for the United Nations to be adequate to the challenges facing it today its institutions need to be reformed, first and foremost in the composition of the United Nations main body that guarantees international peace and security. We must build on the progress achieved so far in the negotiations on Security Council reform and move the process to a more results-oriented phase. Bulgaria considers that enlargement of the Council's two categories of permanent and non-permanent members is one option that enjoys the support of a considerable number of delegations. The increase in the number of non-permanent seats should provide for a just representation of the Eastern European Group, whose membership has more than doubled over the past two decades.

Transparency is impossible without accountability. First, the United Nations must be accountable to its Member States through a continued striving to improve management and the enforcement of strict budgetary discipline, especially in the current period of economic turmoil. We, the Member States, must also be accountable to the United Nations by fulfilling all our commitments, including by paying our financial contributions to the Organization fully, unconditionally and on time — a principle that Bulgaria upholds and adheres to closely.

We all also need to be accountable to future generations for our actions. It is easy to speak of sustainable development, but at the moment we are not even remotely close to making it a reality. On the contrary, the damage we have done to the planet's geology, climate and ecosystems for most of the last century is so significant that scientists are increasingly asserting that the human race has actually managed to push the Earth much faster than usual into a new, possibly more unstable and dangerous geological period.

We need both wise and courageous leadership from the United Nations in our efforts to guarantee peace and security — wise, so as to avoid the temptation to use force when it seems to get results faster than mediation and negotiation, and courageous, to take responsibility when the use of force is a must. The United Nations will benefit much from strengthening its cooperation with regional security organizations. The cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Afghanistan is an excellent example. International support has to continue beyond 2014 for Afghanistan. We were all saddened by the brutal murder of a great Afghan leader, former President Rabbani. His work must inspire us to continue supporting the Afghan Government's efforts to achieve reconciliation and reintegration.

It is high time for bold and decisive actions in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation as well. It is the legal and moral obligation of all of us to honour the commitments undertaken under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the outcome document of the 2010 Review Conference. A

strengthened and robust NPT regime is in the interest of all States, especially with the growing risk of non-State actors getting access to weapons of mass destruction. All States Parties, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are bound by the NPT regime. Leaving the NPT should not be without consequences. Cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is also essential. As long as Iran continues not to provide greater transparency with regard to of its nuclear activities, the concerns of the international community will remain valid. Full compliance with Security Council resolutions and with the provisions of the IAEA safeguards agreement is crucial for a diplomatic solution of this case.

The sad anniversary of the 11 September 2001 attacks in New York, which we commemorated this year, the more recent tragic events in Oslo, the terrorist attacks in Mumbai and other cities of the world prove that terrorism is a global cancer that does not discriminate against developed or developing countries and societies. Its eradication requires decisive action. The successful conclusion of the negotiations on the comprehensive convention on international terrorism has Bulgaria's full support.

I began my statement by focusing on the challenge of tackling non-communicable diseases. Human suffering caused by various illnesses is further exacerbated owing to the effects of the series of global crises in food, finance and energy and the threats associated with climate change. Taken together, these and other new challenges impede progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We must be twice as vigilant as we have been until now. Our world today faces challenges that will shape its tomorrow. We need to be able to meet these challenges in a bold manner, with a clear vision for the future, and tackle them together as a global community of nations.

The meeting rose at 9.15 p.m.